

**STATEMENT OF
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO**

**AVIATION SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING
NTSB REAUTHORIZATION
APRIL 23, 2008**

I want to welcome everyone to our hearing today on the reauthorization of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB).

The NTSB was created during the 1966 consolidation of various transportation agencies into the Department of Transportation (DOT). Its main mission is to independently investigate accidents in all transportation modes, including aviation, pipelines, maritime, rail, truck, and automotive transportation.

In 1974, to further ensure that the NTSB would retain its independence, Congress re-established the Board as a totally separate entity distinct from DOT.

Since its inception in 1967, the NTSB has investigated more than 128,000 aviation accidents and over 10,000 surface transportation accidents, making it one of the world's premier accident investigation agencies. As a result of these investigations, the board has issued approximately 12,000 safety recommendations with an overall acceptance rate of approximately 82 percent.

As a result of NTSB's recommendations, important changes and procedures have been made to improve the safety of the traveling public. For example, NTSB produces a Most Wanted list of transportation safety improvements. This list highlights the most serious safety issues facing transportation. Since the Most Wanted list started in 1990, 73 percent of the 279 recommendations on the list have been accepted and implemented.

To ensure the NTSB can continue to meet its mission to improve transportation safety, it must have the necessary resources and adequately trained staff to handle these complex investigations. Accordingly, the NTSB has submitted a reauthorization proposal that includes additional funding; additional staff; and specific statutory changes to further its mission.

NTSB is requesting increased funding over the next three years: \$87.891 million in FY 2009; \$107.208 million in FY 2010; and \$113.026 million in FY 2011. Under the President's FY09 NTSB budget request of \$87.9 million, no new program initiatives or staff would be funded at that level.

Moreover, the NTSB states that it needs a minimum of 475 full time equivalent employees to fully meet the NTSB's core mission of accident investigation – which is

reflected in its FY10 and FY11 request. We must ensure that the NTSB is fully funded, and that the Agency has the necessary resources to hire additional investigative resources.

According to the NTSB, there are gaps in its statutory authority to investigate certain incidents, obtain evidence, enter into leases, access or protect from disclosure certain information, and investigate accidents in foreign countries.

My colleagues on the Coast Guard Subcommittee also have some concerns with changes in the NTSB proposal which they will be reviewing separately.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of Chairman Rosenker today to discuss the NTSB's mission and resource needs and changes in its reauthorization proposal that will ensure the highest level of safety for our transportation system.

I am also interested in hearing from Dr. Gerald Dillingham on GAO's assessment of the NTSB's general management practices and for an examination of other issues important to this Subcommittee, including the training center, contained in the reauthorization proposal.

Before I recognize Mr. Petri for his opening statement, I ask unanimous consent to allow 2 weeks for all Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and materials by Members and witnesses. Without objection, so ordered.